EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS AND REDEFINING MASCULINITIES

ACTIVITY REPORT

Jan to Dec 2018

EKTA RESOURCE CENTRE FOR WOMEN

2018

BETHEL NAGAR, BIBLE BHAVAN STREET, PONMENI, MADURAI – 625016.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

The year 2018 started with reflection with the team members and supporters on the current issues and challenges and further to develop strategies to strengthen linkages with different stakeholders at the State, National and International level. Ekta has taken the lead in the advocacy group for SDG: Goal 5 at the state level and is also part of a national level study on the experiences of women survivors of violence. The visit of Mr. Rob to EKTA in the month of April was really helpful to reflect on our strength and the gaps that need more focused interventions. During this period, the Tata community water supply project in the surrounding villages of Nambikkai Centre at Killai and the Child line project- Railway child help desk was initiated. The planned interventions were carried out in the following manner.

1. GENDER AND GOVERNANCE

Objective: Strengthening women’s leadership in governance to become strategic change agents in Tamil Nadu and India

In Tamil Nadu, the elections to the Panchayats are still not held since October, 2016. Therefore the work with the elected women representatives could not be organized as per our original plan. However, regular meetings were held with women leaders at the panchayats to keep them updated on the developmental interventions of the State.

1.1. Training on Women Leadership

With the hope that the panchayat election will be held in the near future, the need for women leadership at all level was given priority.

Four meetings were held during this year. The first meeting in January was held on the laws related to women and how to take forward the issues of women through the assistance of the government officials. The second meeting February on the role of women and agriculture and the third on the health and reproductive rights of women was held in the month of May. The fourth
training at Nambikkai Centre, Killai focused on the achievements of women leaders in Tamilnadu. Ms. Sudha, former ward member of Thillaividangan Panchayat was invited to share her experiences on addressing issues like getting work under MGNREG Scheme, new ration cards and other entitlements through government welfare schemes. She also explained in detail how they planned for campaigns like the 16 day activism to address violence against women. She said that they travelled from village to village creating awareness on women’s rights and monitored the functioning of ICDS centres, schools and to actively participate in Grama sabha meetings. Finally, she invited all the participants to contest in the election as and when it happens. On request, she shared information about the BBBP scheme and the Selva magal thittam for girl children.

Around 125 women participated in these meetings regularly. They were happy to attend these meetings. The women came forward with information on the happenings in the villages, the grama sabha meetings, the various schemes that the government is implementing without the panchayat president and the members. The Clerk in the panchayat is the main authority who is implementing all the schemes. Many women are now interested in contesting the president and the ward members election when the panchayat election is due.

All along the women raised their concern about the increasing drinking habit of men. Men having no income of their own, demand money from the women for drinking, if not complied with; they resort to violence. Women take the entire burden of the family on their shoulders and face violence from their drunken husbands. This story is never ending.

At the end women decided that in the forthcoming election they will demand ban of alcohol shops in their area by the political parties.

**Saratha** from MGR Nagar and **Vasanthi** residing at Kalaigner Nagar belong to the Irular community. They attend all our women trainings for more than 7 years. During the month of August, the fishermen society election was held. After a long period of nearly 30 years, these two women contested the election and have been nominated as the President and Vice-President.
1.2. Training for men and youth in communities on the importance of women leadership:

Training for the youth and young men from Killai was organized at Nambikkai Centre on the 8th December 2018. 30 young men participated. Mr. Manimaran, the Assistant Head Master of the Panchayat Union Middle School at Kalaigner Nagar was the invited facilitator. He started by asking the participants “name one woman whom you consider as a good leader?”. There were many answers like Jayalalitha, Indira Gandhi, Mother Theresa and even Margaret Thatcher. After discussions, he asked the participants why they did not think about their mother or the women from their own surroundings. The participants were helped to reflect on the role of women and how such roles remain invisible and most often not given any value at all. Each one shared their experiences with their mothers; how in most difficult situations they had supported the children. They also identified women in their surroundings who have been courageously fighting injustices in communities. The need for the youth to actively engage in the governance system (Gram sabha, panchayat meetings etc) and also the urgent support such women leaders was realized.

Mr. Manimaran shared information about different examinations that they can take up to get jobs in the IT sector and the government departments. Finally, he narrated the story of Malala who is relentlessly fighting to improve education of girls and invited the participants to engage themselves in improving the situation of women and girls in their villages.

1.3. Grama Sabha meetings:

The grama Sabha is the grass root level democratic institution in each village panchayat. A vibrant Grama Sabha is essential for effective functioning of village panchayats by promoting transparency and accountability in administration, enhancing public participation in the planning and implementation of development schemes.
During the year, 4 Grama Sabha meetings were held. The focus of the Grama Sabha meeting on the 26th January was to assess the immediate need of the villages. The participating members gave a long wish list and the panchayat clerk noted down all. He shared that the consolidation of this will be done at the block level and once the final list comes to the panchayat, he will share it in the next meeting.

24th April is observed as the National Panchayat Raj day, as on this day the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment reserving not less than 1/3 seats for women and ensuring community participation through Grama Sabha meetings was passed in 1992. This year, a special Grama Sabha was convened on this date. The main focus was to familiarize communities on basic development indicators such as health and nutrition, education, agriculture and irrigation, basic needs of villages, financial inclusion and skill development. An open invitation was put forth for the unemployed youth in the villages to take part in the skill development training under the scheme ‘Kaushal Panjee’. The need to ban plastic was also discussed. It also focused on offering Mudra loans to encourage small and micro enterprises.

The Grama Sabha on 15th August and 2nd October focused mainly on the skill development needs of the villagers. Skill development courses organized in various parts of the districts were shared and the youth from the panchayats were asked to join these courses and get benefitted.

Ekta team members did preparatory work and encouraged women to participate in these meetings. The members were encouraged to monitor and participate in the development discussions that are happening in their panchayat level. When the women leaders participate in Ekta’s training programmes, they share their experiences and were also invited to be a part of Ekta’s activities with the adolescent girls in the communities.
2. GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Objective: Empowering women by strengthening awareness on the use of national and international HR instruments to address violence against women and girls.

2.1. Legal Training for Women:

Trainings to create awareness on the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act-2005 (PWDVA) and also the law to address sexual harassment of women at work place were organized on 6th January at Ekta Office and on September 19th at P. Mettupatti. In the first training at Ekta 28 women participated and in the second training at P. Mettupatti, 31 women participated. The training started with brain storming session on what is domestic violence? What is work place? And what is Sexual harassment? It was observed that mostly the physical abuse was in families were seen as violence and that to it was normalized by saying that women instigate men etc... . The facilitator shared about the enactment process of PWDVA. She explained about the definition of domestic violence given in the law like sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse (use of abusive language) and economic abuse (not giving money for house expenses and also forcibly taking the money from women) in addition to the physical abuse. The women shared their experiences to gain clarity on the above definition. The provisions in the act like the residence order, protection order, monetary relief, and compensation order etc were explained. A small pictorial booklet on the Act was given to the participants.

Understanding of work of women and workplace was debated and the case of Banwari Devi (Visakha Judgement) was shared. It was decided to hold such trainings periodically to create legal awareness among women and also to help them in the redressal process.

This was followed by a discussion on entrepreneurship as a means of women's economic empowerment. It was observed that each household has 2 to 3 cows which are maintained by the women in the family. But the milk is taken for sale by the men. The men use the money for alcohol and come home drunk. It was discussed and decided
a few women can join together, collect the milk and take it for sell. It was also discussed that as an alternative, they would try to find a suitable person to take the milk from each house. This way the women can get the income due to them. The women also discussed on strategies to handle the wrath of men collectively.

On 29th August, training was organized for 40 women at Karumathur on the Health and Legal Rights of women. The programme started with a discussion on the process of law making and how it protects our life and dignity. The resource person explained in detail about the provisions of PWDVA and prevention of sexual harassment at workplace. The women were reluctant to share their experiences of domestic violence as well as work place harassment. Case studies on these issues were shared and they were asked to reflect on the case studies in smaller groups. At the end some of the women shared that, the family and the communities should feel ashamed when such incidences are happening and not the women. They also said that they will speak to their fellow women in villages on this and more importantly educate their boys to treat women and girls with respect.

Following this, the role of grama sabha meetings were discussed. Grama Sabha is one of the most powerful tools to solve the problems of the villages and hence, it should be utilized to the maximum.

2.2. The State Level SDG Process:

The SDG Watch Tamil Nadu was launched in September 2017. EKTA was requested to take the lead on the GOAL 5. This involves capacity building as well as facilitating NGO participation in the monitoring process. A two days capacity building titled “SDG from a Gender Lens” was organized on the 23rd and 24th of January, 2018 at ICSA, Chennai. The purpose was to help participants understand the SDG process, to reflect on the targets and indicators and to strengthen the national, state and sub state level monitoring process. A working group was evolved to sharpen the SDG goal 5 indicators and strengthen the monitoring process on goal 5 in the State.
Following this, several meetings in various locations were organized to create awareness about the SDG process and the need for monitoring by the communities.

On 21st March, a State level consultation was organized by the SDG watch in Chennai on the Status of child rights in Tamil Nadu. Ms Bimla was asked to chair a session and also to contribute a chapter to the document on the status of child rights in Tamil Nadu.

There was also a consultation organized by the SDG watch on SDG and Labour: Strategic Planning for Multi-Actor Engagement 11 July 2018 Hotel Vestin Park, Chennai. Ms Bimla chaired a session.

The working committee meeting of the Goal 5 was organized on 21st August at Chennai to discuss about the roles and responsibilities of members in bringing out a base line report. It was decided that Ms Ranjani will be requested to do the overall facilitation of this process. The following members took responsibilities for specific targets.

5.1 - End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls- Ms. Tharini, Prajnya Trust

5.2 – Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. (Economic violence – Sneha, Dr. Hema Latha / Social Violence – Ms. Sheelu)

5.3 - Eliminate all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation - Arunodhaya

5.4 – Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work - Action Aid

5.5 – Ensure women’s full and effective participation at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life- HRF, Ekta, Law trust

5.6 – Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights– Mr. John Joseph – TNVHA, Ms. Geetha


References: Global Indicators, National Indicators, TN Data – Primary and secondary evidences. The date for submission of the draft report was fixed as 15th September, 2018.
The annual convention of the SDG watch was held on 25th and 26th September at Chennai. The working team had worked very hard and brought out a 50 page report and made a collective presentation in the convention.

2.3. Implementation of the SH Act.

The sexual harassment of women at workplace (prevention, protection and redressal) Act, 2013 was given due importance in all interactive sessions held by Ekta. Ms. Bimla is a part of the various sexual harassment prevention committees in Universities, Medical colleges and hospitals. However, awareness of this act and also the political will to implement the same is very low. The provision to address sexual harassment in organized sector through an internal committee is known to some extent. But resistance to implement becomes a stumbling block. The common expression is that, “we do not have such issues as we are very sensitive and respect women”. The situation of the unorganized sector is very pathetic, very little awareness on the district level local Committees. Ekta has developed a poster on the SH Act for dissemination, this was released on the women’s day. However there is a long way to go in actualizing the intent of this law.

2.4. Campaign Activities / Networking and Advocacy

a. One Billion Rising: Ekta has been organizing One Billion Rising Campaign (OBR) since 2013 in Madurai in collaboration with various civil society organizations and individuals; with support from Jagori, New Delhi. In 2017, there were multiple launches and 3 planning meetings held for the main public event in 2018. A working committee was evolved and responsibilities were shared. On 14th Feb 2018 at the Gandhi Museum representatives from 19 NGOs, 2 Universities, 13 colleges and individual activists participated in the OBR event. Around 500 youth participated in the rally. Ms. Mallika, the Superintendent of Police (Dowry Prohibition Cell) spoke on the various forms of violence faced by women and girls. A brief history of the OBR campaign was shared. Flying of Balloons, oath taking and
cultural presentation by participating organizations were part of the event. The main objective was to create public awareness about the issue of violence against women and girls. The venue being Gandhi Museum, a large number of public visited us and took part in the programme.

b. 16 days of activism to end violence against women and girls: Violence against women continues to occur at an alarming scale in every country in the world. Too often it is accepted as normal behavior and the global culture of discrimination against women allows violence to occur with impunity. In recent years, the voices of survivors and activists, through campaigns have reached a crescendo that cannot be silenced any more. Advocates understand that while the names and contexts may differ across geographic locations, women and girls everywhere are experiencing extensive abuse and their stories need to be brought to light.

The theme of the 2018, 16 day campaign was “End Gender-Based Violence in the World of Work.” Our goal for 2018 is to continue to target the institutions in which gender-based violence is perpetuated and push for systemic change and accountability. Accordingly, various activities were organized during the 16 days in schools, railway stations and in the community. A total of 1466 women and girls were oriented. The detail list is in Annexure: 1

There was widespread appreciation among the school teachers and the public. The women in the railway station informed that they came to know about information on the legislations to address violence against women and girls. While waiting for the train, they were approached and given handouts.

So also, the teachers informed that the information on child rights, women’s rights and the legislations to address such violence was very useful and thanked Ekta for arranging such events in their schools.

The Headmistress of the Seva Mandir School was very appreciative. She thanked Ekta for the initiative taken to conduct the quiz competition on the constitution of India, which the whole school enjoyed.
c. Women’s Day

On 14th March, women’s day was observed at Munduvelanpatti village in Kovilankulm panchayat in which 107 members participated. The celebration started by greeting one another. An air of happiness was filled in the area. The history of women’s day was shared. The theme for this year 2018: “Press for Progress” was shared. If women work with determination, we can achieve what we would like to see. Hence, we should give a helping hand to young women to come up in life. We should raise our voice against child marriage and girl child discrimination at all levels. We should try to create space for equal opportunities for both women and men.

On March 16th, Women’s Day was celebrated at the Vadivelkarai panchayat wherein 100 plus members participated. The issues of child marriage, violence against women were spoken in detail. Finally the participants took oath not to indulge in violence and also to support survivors of violence. It was unanimously agreed that violence is not a solution to any problem; rather it is a problem in itself. Therefore it was decided to hold debates and discussions among the youth on the increasing nature of violence and their role in addressing such issues.

On March 24th, Ekta organized the Women’s Day at Hotel Weshtern Park, Madurai. There were 32 participants from diverse background. The participants were given a warm welcome and information about the evolution of women’s day was shared. A poster on Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (prevention, protection and redressal) Act, 2013 was released by Advocate Ms. Epsibai who is also a General Body member of Ekta. The first copy was received by Dr A. Santha, Director of Media Research Forum.
Following this, the participating women were encouraged to share their life stories. It was heartening to see how these women had struggled to overcome the discrimination, neglect, humiliation and violence in their lives. In fact they were reiterating the notion that ‘you can’t kill the spirit of a woman’. Many women came forward to recite poems either written by them or published in magazines.

The participants were emotionally charged and expressed the need to have such sharing periodically. The video of the OBR event was screened followed by a discussion on the follow up programmes.

d. The International Day of the Girl Child was observed on 11th October 2018 in Ponmudiyar Corporation Girls Higher Secondary School, Madurai. 456 students studying 6th std to 9th std, Training Teachers, 15 School Class Teachers and the Headmistress participated.

Mr. Satish, the community sports coach informed the students about the need to celebrate this day, importance of the day, aim of the day and why we are celebrating this day for the past six years. He spoke about the problems faced by the girl child like abuse, violence and sexual harassment of girl child. He also spoke how the girl child should be take care themselves. Finally an Oath was taken:

- I will not discriminate against girls.
- I will not excel violence on girls.
- I will not keep quiet when I witness violence committed against girls.
- I will actively oppose, act and arise when I witness violence on girls.
- I will demand justice for the girl victims of violence.
- I will amplify the voices of marginalized girl and create a platform for their voices to be heard.
e. South Asian Women’s Day

South Asian Women’s Day (SAWD) is celebrated each year on the 30th of November. Being a partner of Sangat, Ekta started celebrating this day from the year 2010 as a part of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign.

This year, Ekta partnered with other NGOs, Community and the school children and held discussions and events on the key issues that women and girls face today. Signature Campaigns were organized among the students and the public. Candles were lit at the end of the event to express our solidarity and unity to our sisters in South Asia.

f. Study on the women’s experiences of shelter: Ekta is a part of the network by name “Lam-lynti Chittara Nerallu” and as a part of this a five state study “On women’s experiences of shelter” in India has been initiated. Ekta is doing this study in Tamil Nadu with main focus on the southern districts.

Violence against women is a grave violation of their human rights and is rooted in the gender biased discrimination and patriarchal social norms that normalises such violence. Women survivors of violence often find themselves at a cross road, not knowing where to go and what to do. Finding a place to stay becomes the most urgent need, and the shelter home for women was envisaged to address this need by providing them with temporary shelter.

Women’s rights organizations and feminist groups had a critical reflection on the state of shelter homes to consolidate their learning and experiences for use as an advocacy tool. They aimed to re-imagine shelter homes as open, positive spaces that ensure a rights-based, dignity-restoring support system for survivors of violence. Its main objectives have been to: a) review the conceptual underpinning of shelter homes for women; b) produce evidence-based knowledge on the operational conditions of and services by shelter homes (including challenges and best practices); and c) demand accountability of the state via evidence-based advocacy and outreach for optimal functioning of women’s shelter homes.
In keeping with these objectives, Ekta has undertaken this action-research in Tamil Nadu. It had successfully completed this research study and is in the process to finalize the report for submission. As a follow up of this study, Ekta had decided to continue its work in all the shelter homes that were visited.

**g. Follow up of Family Court Study:** Ekta had done a study on family courts in 1998. The Family Courts Act, 1984 provides for establishment of Family Courts by State governments with a view to promoting conciliation and securing speedy settlement of disputes relating to marriage and family affairs and for matters connected therewith, In our study report, a set of recommendations were made. It is a statutory mandate to have family courts in every district, which means 32 courts in Tamil Nadu. However, the number of functional family courts in Tamil Nadu was only 20 as of May 2016. Ekta is continuously monitoring the changes that are happening in Tamilnadu. It is encouraging to see some of the recommendations being taken up by the government. Though all 32 districts don’t have a family court, the government is keen on setting up the court as soon as possible.

The other important study of Ekta on the use of 498A in Tamil Nadu is being referred widely by the NGOs as well as the academics for research and further studies. The provisions of this section have been diluted by the advocacy campaign of the men’s group, accusing misuse by women demanding repeal of this section. As a result there has been many modifications, still it remains as a last resort for women fighting cruelty in marital homes. The struggle for justice for women remains a real concern.

### 3 GENDER AND MASCULINITIES

**Objective:** To work towards redefining Masculinities by strengthening Life Skills of Adolescents and Youth and engaging them in gender equality actions.

#### 3.1. Children’s Club Peer Leaders Training

There are 5 Children’s clubs. In the month of June, the election process for these clubs was initiated and the new members were inducted. After the election, the new members
met in the month of July to discuss about the issues that needed action. The main issues stated were:

- Drop out children
- Quality of food supplied in the noon-meal scheme in the schools
- To strive to make their village plastic free / smoke free / violence free
- To work to make their village green.

The children’s club in the supplementary education centres ensures that children follow the personal health and hygiene, dress code and are on time at the centre, guarantees that children don’t become a dropout, attend school regularly and come on special classes during exam time and to encourage the children to pass in exams.

Trainings for the peer leaders of Children’s Clubs were organized on topics like Child Rights, Health and Hygiene, Environmental issues, identifying and addressing community issues etc. These clubs held monthly meetings in which various aspects pertaining to children were discussed. These meetings were organized in a systematic way where the children sat in a circle, welcomed the members, the minutes of the previous meeting was read, the activities carried out during the month was shared, the action plan for the next month was discussed and finalized and at the end, they departed with a vote of thanks, promising to gather on a future date decided by the club. The clubs provided a safe place for children to learn, play and carry out activities that benefit their communities. During the reporting period, the members observed all important days, participated in the events organized at schools, planted saplings in the school campus and village, participated in the election of new members for children’s club and attended the training programme in Oct’18 on the importance of Mangrove gardens and the need to protect the environment.

3.2. Children’s Camp: (Creative week end Camps and Summer camp)

In Nambikkai Centre, Creative Camp was organized in January, in which the children were taught to make paper toy, shawls, and flowers, wire bags, dolls from wastes and newspapers. They were also oriented and encouraged to write stories. Ekta has decided to publish these stories. One Net Ball Goal camp was organized in May where life skills were taught to the adolescents. Another Children’s camp was organized in Nov’18 high
lighting on the need to develop leadership among children. Case studies on child leaders were shared.

**Summer camp** was organized for 6 days from 7th to 12th May at Kodimangalam centre, Madurai. The theme was ‘Nature for Water. 41 children attended the camp. They were facilitated to explore their hidden talent through the creative sessions, better their communication skills and prepare well to meet the future challenges. Games and practical sessions were quite engaging for the participants. Parents were invited to the concluding session where the children shared their experiences of the camp.

Sessions on Good touch and bad touch was imparted in the interactive sessions with adolescent boys and girls. After a few days, one of the boys had a bad experience in the bus where an elderly man sitting next to him, slowly started touching his thighs and private parts. The boy immediately remembered what was told in the class. He said No and pushed away the man's hand. He also got up and changed his seat. He shared this experience with Ekta team when they went for the next session and immensely thanked them for creating this awareness. He has volunteered to be a peer leader to work with the adolescent boys in his area.

### 3.3. **Safety Audit of Public Spaces:**

Ekta has been continuously giving awareness to the college students on safety of women and girls at public spaces. Students were oriented on the safety audit process and the need and right of women to have a safe public space. Three interns volunteered to participate in a safety walk in the railway station and they were able to identify vulnerable spaces. The vulnerability map was prepared and it has been decided to present the findings with the Divisional Regional Manager.

### 3.4. **Workshop on Role of Media in Creating Gender Identity:**

This workshop was organized at the Department of Communication, Madurai Kamarajar University on 20.09.18. The objectives were a) to facilitate the participants to
understand the gendered socialization process and b) to help them understand the role of media in strengthening such gender stereotypes.

Dr. Nagarathinam, the Head of the Department, extended a warm welcome and explained about the need for understanding the role played by media in the society. He spoke about the long partnership between this department and Ekta and urged the students to actively participate in this workshop. There were 25 participants (1st & 2nd year students, M.Phil, P.hD students).

The participants were asked to introduce themselves and share the following.

- What you like about yourself
- What changes you would like to make

**Observation:**

It was difficult to share about one self. Finally they came up with the qualities they like in self - soft spoken, friendly, easy to move with others, understanding others, ability to adjust, helping in kitchen etc. However it was very difficult to speak on the changes they would like to make. It was comfortable to say that they would like to see a casteless, equal society.

This was further discussed to help them to realize the good qualities they have and also to work on some of the limitations that they would like to improve upon in future.

Then the group was divided into 2 smaller groups and was asked to draw a male and female image in a chart and write down the attributes that came to their mind. The outcome was the following:

- Men are portrayed a strong, active and dominant character.
- Women are stereotyped as always being dependent, submissive and good looking objects.
This exercise helped the students to understand the socialization process. At this point, it was explained about sex and gender, and how through socialization process, the biological differences between the male and female are converted into inequality.

This was further substantiated through discussions on the following points.

- Social perception of gender roles and identity is often reinforced by representation of men and women in media.
- Gender is the learned difference of men and women ascribed through traditional, cultural, social values and meanings.
- These values are constructed through our knowledge from social institutions.
- Our knowledge about gender is developed through our regular activities and what we see.
- In this regard, media as a social institution has a profound role to aid our knowledge development about gender roles and identity.
- Traditionally, media represents women in passive roles like mother; good housewives etc. and often limited their actions.
- These representations shape the understanding of how to be masculine and feminine. The identity of gender is an idea or ideology that has transformed across time and context.
- Trend in print and advertisements, to represent women and men over time and what modern media is promoting about gender roles and identity.
- More and more commercials are directed to children. They indicate “the proper place” in the society for girls and boys. Girls are shown as babysitters nursing dolls or cleaning house with a pink cleaning kit, whereas boys do sports or play computer games.
- Advertising imagery of the teenage years continues and extends the differences between males and females.

Following this, a documentary film, the ‘Woman Returns’ was shown to the participants. To close the session some of the participants shared their reflection; they enjoyed the group work, the discussion helped them to understand the socialization process, they realized the important role played by media in shaping the stereotype image of women and men in society. The workshop was facilitated by Ms Bimla with support from Ms Tamilmoni and Ms Suganya.
3.5. Orientation to College students and Internship:

The students of 2nd year BSW (38) and MSW 1st year students (59) from Madurai Institute of Social Sciences (MISS) came in two batches for orientation on the Vision, Mission and Activities of Ekta.

During the year 6 Students from 2 colleges of Madurai and one college of Kerala came for one month internship.

Another 19 students from 4 colleges in Madurai came for 2 days a week for one semester. The students were given an orientation to the work of Ekta and based on their expressed interest, they were asked to design a small project to strengthen their understanding of women’s issues. Two of the students assessed the awareness on PWDVA, Sexual harassment prevention law
One batch of students used a questionnaire to understand the awareness on Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. They administered the questionnaire with 30 women in Veerapandi Village in Madurai east panchayat to assess their knowledge and perception about child marriage. There were questions like, who is a child? what is the legal marriage age of a girl/ boy ? Whom to report about child marriage?, and what are the punishments under the new law etc. It was found that 17 of the respondent women knew about the legal provision but 13 women had no idea. The students also engaged the women in a conversation on the negative impact of child marriage on the child as well as the family and society at large.

Another group of students used a questionnaire to understand about the awareness about sexual harassment at workplace and also the knowledge about the law among their peer group students. It was found that only 10 of the 30 student respondents had some knowledge about the law, but there was common understanding that it is very much physical and that to women are responsible for such happenings. Following this, there was discussion at the college level and the urgent need for creating proper awareness was expressed. The college staff promised to do the follow up.
4. EMPOWERMENT OF GIRL CHILDREN:

**Objective:** To promote girl child education and to prevent violence against girl Children:

**4.1. Training for Women and Girls with focus on Legal Literacy, Child Rights and Health:**

Meetings with women and girls from the surrounding villages including the parents of the children at Nambikkai centre are organised regularly. Topics like child rights, care and protection of children with focus on POCSO Act, health and nutrition, reproductive rights of women and girls are taken for discussion. Case studies were shared and short videos were shown to facilitate discussion.

It was also found that there was no sharing between the parents and children and it was creating tension in their relationships. This issue was discussed at length and finally the need to improve communication through ‘listening to children so that they speak and speak to children so that they listen’ was stressed. It was decided to continue this discussion.

_Sundari_ (Name Changed) shared that as a mother till now, she gave her 2 children good food and clothing. She never spoke to them about their experiences in the school. But after attending the training at Ekta, she became aware about good touch and bad touch and the issue of child sexual abuse. “Never ever will I be the same Sundari again. I will be their first friend and become their most trusted mother” I will spend with them quality time.

On 24th December, training on health and reproductive health rights of women in Nambikkai Centre with 47 young women and the local health worker Ms. Chandra facilitated the session. She explained to the participating members about the menstrual cycle, good touch and bad touch and also on menstrual hygiene. She talked about the sexual and reproductive health rights of girls and explained about the need to take more vegetables in their daily food that are locally and seasonally available.
The participating women had many doubts about their own health and the health of their children. Chandra patiently responded to their queries and finally the participants agreed to have such interactions periodically and also take good care of themselves.

4.2 Dissemination of information on government schemes for adolescents:

On 11th of December 2018, a meeting was organized and 20 adolescents from Kalaigner Nagar participated. The meeting was organized in the Anganwadi centre at Kalaigner Nagar. Kavitha, the field animator of Ekta facilitated the meeting.

She gave an overview of the situation of adolescent girls; they constitute more than 1.2 billion worldwide, and about 21% of the Indian population. They are the future of our nation, a major demographic and economic force. They have specific needs which vary with gender, life circumstances and socio-economic conditions. They face challenges like poverty, lack of access to health care services, unsafe environments etc. It is a period of preparation for undertaking greater responsibilities like familial, social, cultural and economic issues in adulthood.

She expressed her concern over the fact that more than 26 per cent girls are still married before 18 years of age and the teenage pregnancy continues to be 7.9 per cent. She reiterated that a large no. of girls and also boys are pulled out of schools by parents and sent to industrial places to work. Though the families get some economic relief the long term impact on the life of the adolescents are pathetic. She narrated a few case studies from the nearby villages - Some had chronic health problem, others had physical and sexual abuse.

She explained to the participants about the government welfare schemes that are available to support adolescent girls. She listed out the schemes like BBBP Scheme for Girl Child, Selva Mahal Thittam, Sivagami Ammaiayar memorial girl child protection scheme. She also explained about the various scholarships that the government has given to girl children to complete their education.
During the interaction with the adolescent girls, it was shared that a 16 year transgender boy from the nearby Irular community had dropped out of school due to the humiliation by the peer group. To escape the situation, he went to work in Chennai. There also he was subjected to sexual abuse. Unable to bear this, he returned back home. His wish was to become a girl with the name Oviya. She was assisted to speak to organization working on the issues of trans- persons to know the procedure. She was asked to come with the birth certificate and Aadhar card once she was 18 years old. She is now coming to Nambikkai Centre to learn computer and tailoring. She is called now informally named as Kalai Oviya and she is called as Oviya by the team.

4.3 Nambikkai Centre:

The intake of children to Nambikkai is increased from 25 to 35 from June 2018. All the children are taken care well and they are healthy. Their educational needs are met. One supplementary teacher comes to teach English and Maths for the children in the evening. Dance and Music classes are conducted during the week ends. The children studying XI and XII are taught computer and tailoring course. 68 new books have been added to the children’s library. The children were encouraged to participate in various competitions held in their schools and other schools at the district level and won prizes.

Children’s health was well taken care by the staff team. Children who need personal counseling were given at the center. The newly admitted children were given individual and group counseling. On 24th March, World TB day awareness was organized in Nambikkai Centre. Around 70 men and women from the nearby villages participated.
On 10th February, the Department of Health in collaboration with Ekta organized the Medical Camp at Nambikkai Centre, Killai. Mr. Pandiyan MLA inaugurated the Chief Minister comprehensive health insurance policy in this medical camp. 75 pregnant women’s blood group, blood count, blood pressure and scan were taken and the results were given immediately. ECG and blood pressure were taken for 13 people. Siddha medical team provided Nilavembu juice and oil for knee and leg pain.

There are three SECs in villages covering around 145 children. On 22nd Mar’18 all supplementary centres celebrated the World Water day.

The Special summer Computer class for the school going children of X and XII std commenced on April 25th with 15 students. Their course was completed on June 14th and the 35th batch has commenced with 7 students. The 18th batch with 12 students is ongoing for the tailoring course.

“Ten Years of Nambikkai”

Nambikkai Centre was inaugurated on February 24, 2007. To mark the completion of its 10th year, on 3rd February, a get-together was organized with the former and the present staff, children and the friends. A total of 37 (7 former staff and 30 passed out children) came to this get together.

There was a discussion on the future of Nambikkai and what activities could be taken up further. There were many suggestions from the participants like starting a garment production unit and an outlet to sell the products, constructing a big training hall for renting out and improving the use of land by putting more plants. It was decided to explore the possibility of implementing the above suggested ideas.

The children also suggested that since TALLY is required by all companies, the computer course should include this.

Home Management Committee meets once in two months with the staff of EKTA, Headmasters of schools nearby, Police officials from Killai Police Station, Medical officer
from the Killai PHC, representatives from the children and their parents and the staff from the district child protection unit and CWC. The records are verified and suggestions are given for the execution of the project in the right way.

4. 4 Exposure to Nambikkai Children:

The Nambikkai Children were taken on an exposure trip to Pitchavaram on the 1st of December 2018. It was an educational cum exposure trip. The Forestor, explained to the children about the mangrove forest in Pitchavaram. This mangrove forest is spread along 1100 hectares of land and is the second largest mangrove forest of its kind in India. (After the sunderbans in West Bengal) It is separated from the Bay of Bengal by a sand bar. There are almost 40 islands in this forest. This mangrove forest is unique because of their ability to tolerate salt water; thanks to their aerial roots. The mangroves also attracts migrant and local birds including snipes, cormorants, egrets, storks, herons, spoonbills and pelicans. About 177 species of birds; belonging to 15 orders and 41 families have been recorded. High population of birds could be seen from November to January.

The children then played in the tourism campus, saw various places around Pitchavaram through the binocular and returned to Nambikkai Centre happily.

5. LIFE SKILL TO ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN SCHOOLS THROUGH SPORTS

Ekta partners with The Naz Foundation (India) Trust, New Delhi in implementing the Goal Programme. It uses netball and life skills education to transform the lives of young underprivileged girls in India, on and off the court. It is a collaborative and multi-stakeholder initiative to build self-confidence and give adolescent girls a better life. This programme was initiated from the year 2016 – 2017 in a minimum of 2 schools and 1 college.
The positive response from the teachers and students has encouraged us to extend this programme to 2 more schools and 1 college in Madurai and 3 schools in Killai covering a total of 1260 girls. This year the programme is renamed as “Young People’s Initiative”

This year the Young people initiative is taken to 3 colleges (Mangayarkarasi College of Arts and Science for girls, CSI College of Arts and Science for Girls and Saraswathi Narayan College of Arts and Science) where 400 students were sensitized on life-skill, communication and career choices.

One girl who was to be married at the age of 16, stopped her marriage

The children liked the sessions on menstrual hygiene, conflict resolution and peer pressure and asked plenty of questions to clarify themselves. Most of the children wanted to know how to stop their parents from fighting. One child came and shared the problems faced by her and her mom when her father comes home drunk every day night. He pours kerosene on them and frightens them that he will kill them. This case is taken up and followed by Ekta.

There are many success stories from this continuous life skill programme:

- Sexual abuse by an elderly man next door, was stopped by the girl by informing her father and action taken accordingly
- Sexual abuse by the step father was stopped by the girl and her mother
- Team spirit among the girls have developed
- The myth that girls should not play is over ridden
- The various myth on Menstruation and HIV are clarified
- Domestic violence by the father is stopped
Netball Practice Match with Boys team

In Ekta training centre at Kodimangalam, a group of boys were identified and given training on netball. Weekend practice match was organized in which the team of 11 boys from Kodimangalam Village and 5 Ekta team members participate. The boys felt very happy and want to continue this process. Wearing the sports dress and playing with domes and bibs gives the feeling of a real match. From this team 5 boys are selected and they are representing Ekta in the One Nation Netball Cup Tournament to be held in New Delhi from April 28 to May 1st 2019. 5 girls studying in Seva Mandir Higher Secondary School, killai is also participating in this tournament for 5 days.

6. STUDY CIRCLE:

Study circles were organized twice this year focusing on the rising violence against women and girls. Children are supposed to be protected. They’re supposed to have a childhood spent about playtime before homework and about making up with their best friends. But in India, children are scared. And they should be. The tragic and in-human act of rape, torture and the murder of an 8 year old child in Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir has jolted the entire nation. The State is lagging behind in the rate of conviction of rape cases of all other States in the country. The conviction rate of rape cases in the State of Tamil Nadu was only about 20 per cent on an average, while the all India rate stood at 25 per cent for the past 10 years. When this is the situation in India, how do we equip our children to protect themselves. The situation in India is quite grim and all of us should think aloud of safety and protection of our girls and women in public and private spaces.
General Body Meeting and EC Meeting

The general body meeting was organised on 29.06.2018. The staff team presented the activity report. The new initiatives like Tata water project and the Rail way child help desk was critically reviewed by the board members appreciated the team members and gave suggestions for the improvement. The EC meetings were organised periodically in which more detailed discussions were held on the programmes.

Foundation Day:

The foundation day was observed in the office with the new team members of Ekta. A video – glimpses from the past, a documentation of the past programmes were shown to them.

Other Activities:

a. Launch of Community Water supply plant: This is a project supported by TATA group to provide clean drinking water at an affordable price through a sustainable community based initiative. Ekta has an agreement to initiate and monitor 15 entrepreneurial sites in its field intervention area.

b. Gender Audit Study @ Bharathiar University: Ekta was invited by the Dept. of Women’s Study of Bharathiar University to do the gender audit of the university on the 6th and 7th of February 2018. The 3 member peer team visited various departments collectively and individually to elicit the information. The team completed this study and presented their report to the University and suggested ways to improve as a way forward.
c. **People’s Budget Initiative (PBI):** A National Consultation was held on 15th March 2018 bringing together representatives of people’s movements, civil society coalitions, grassroots level organisations, and budget groups from across the country working within the rights-based framework on different aspects of governance and human development.

d. **Ekta Railway Child Helpdesk:** EKTA has now partnered with Childline India Foundation and has initiated the Railway Child Help Desk at Madurai Railway Station. The team has started functioning from the 25th April 2018. As of December 2018, 92 cases were rescued and rehabilitated. There have been many cases which needed counseling and referral. We are in the process of equipping ourselves to strengthen this programme.

One girl who was rescued by our team informed; please send me to a school. I wish to study and become a police officer. Once I become a police officer I will catch my father and mother and put them in jail.

The girl was sent to the Child Welfare Committee and is now continuing her studies in a government residential school.

**VISITORS TO EKTA**

**Visitors from United States:** With reference from TTS, a 7 member team of educationalists from the U.S. visited us on 13th Jan, 2018. They came to know about the situation of women in T.N. Ekta’s intervention to address women's issues. They shared much interest to understand the intervention strategies in the schools and its follow up.

**Visitors from CWS:** Mr Rob from CWS visited Ekta on 6th and 7th April 2018. Meetings were arranged with different stake holders like the adolescent girls, the community women, student interns and the staff team.

The women from the TPK block (from 3 panchayats) met at Kodimangalam training Centre on 6th April. The women shared their experiences from the trainings they attended in EKTA on women in agriculture. (Sustainable agriculture / Organic farm)
The various topics they had attended were on the laws for women, the need for greater role of women in agriculture, the impact of climate change and also organic farming as one of the key strategy to deal with the climate change. They also shared about their reflection that they had on the land holdings of women and also their commitment to undertake mapping of the land resources at the panchayat level with specific focus on community property resources. During the discussion it was found that in each of the training sessions, they had follow up plans; implementation of these plans still remain as a concern. Mr. Rob appreciated the enthusiasm in women and requested the organizers to closely monitor the follow up actions to have desired impact.

The interns and the adolescent girls from the community also had a discussion with Mr. Rob the participants expressed that the sessions conducted by Ekta are very informative and the topics covered were relevant to them. They felt that their self-esteem and confidence level has been boosted up.

Four interns had come and some could not come because of their exam schedule. The interns expressed their willingness to continue their association with Ekta once they complete their education.

The next day, during the discussion with the staff team, Mr. Rob expressed that he was impressed by the quantum of work done by the organization and raised certain points for reflection:

- Use of Resource material: It was shared that the resource material at Ekta are being distributed to the participants of various training programmes, schools, colleges and NGOs on request.
- Relevance of activities of Ekta: It was shared that the theory of change process was undertaken in which the relevance of some of the activities was critically reflected and based on this the next five year plan has been developed.
- Monitoring process and the reporting: The monitoring of each of the activities is done informally in the weekly staff meetings and formally during the meetings with the board members and external consultants. The comment on the reporting format
was well taken and it was agreed that hence forth the report shall capture more of impact rather than narration.

- The team appreciated the visit of Ms. Pauline earlier and now Mr. Rob and shared that such visits should be made on a regular basis. It was also expressed that it will be good to have of networking among the partners of CWS in different regions. This will strengthen the sharing and learning of partners of CWS.

**Visitors from NAZ:** Naz team visited Ekta and had discussion with the Goal Programme team to monitor the implementation process.

In similar line there were visitors from **Child India Foundation** and **Tata sustainable group** to discuss about the progress of the interventions supported by them. There were many visitors from colleges & NGOs across the state to understand more about Ekta’s work.

**Training and Exposure of staff team:**

The new staff was given orientation to the vision and mission of Ekta. The programme staff team was sent to different training programmes within the state and outside. They also facilitated various training programmes with grass root NGO’s. The team had representation in second global conference of Girls not Brides in Malaysia, in Girls Count Nation level meetings and the budget discussions at the national level as part of people's budget initiative. One of the team members was called for an interview for the Voluntary Sector award at NFI, Delhi. Resource materials prepared by EKTA is constantly used in our in-house trainings and in training programmes outside.

In a recently released NITI Aayog health index report, Tamil Nadu was ranked third for this overall performance with regard to health. However, the report also highlighted some key challenges the state faces, which need to be address immediately, chief of which is the drop in sex ratio in the state. While talking about gender equality sex ratio becomes the core issue to address the prevailing gender biased discrimination in our society. With the SDG monitoring process we hope to make a dent on the above challenge in the coming years with support and solidarity from our board members, donors and our supporters.
### 16 Day of activism on Violence against women and girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Details of Events Organized</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.   | 25.11.2018 | Nambikkai Centre, Killai  
The children were oriented on the various types of abuses girl children face. They were informed about good and bad touch and in case if anybody takes advantage of them, the measures to take was informed to them. | 35                  |
| 2.   | 26.11.2018 | Ponmudiyar Corporation Girls Higher Secondary School, Madurai  
**Signature Campaign**  
The children and teachers were oriented on the 16 days of activism and how this is used to create awareness on the issues that women face and solve it.  
The various forms of violence faced by women and girls were discussed  
The laws and special cells in the police department to help women in particular was informed  
In the end an oath was taken | 150 children and staff |
| 3.   | 27.11.2018 | Velliveethiyar Corporation Girls Higher Secondary School, Madurai  
**Same as Above** | 210 children and staff |
| 4.   | 28.11.2018 | Kasthuribai Gandhi Corporation Girls Higher Secondary School, Madurai  
**Same as Above** | 100 children and staff |
| 5.   | 29.11.2018 | CSI Girls Higher Secondary School, Madurai  
**Same as Above** | 80 children and staff |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30.11.2018</td>
<td>Madurai Railway Station</td>
<td>The members of the Railway Child Help Desk joined hands with Ekta Team and jointly organized the South Asian Women’s Day. The importance of this day was explained. Candles were lit and an oath was taken</td>
<td>30 women and men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.12.2018</td>
<td>Madurai Railway Station</td>
<td>The members of the Railway Child Help Desk joined hands with Ekta Team and jointly organized the Signature Campaign</td>
<td>60 women and men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02.12.2018</td>
<td>Killai</td>
<td>A meeting was organized in Kalaigner Nagar, Killai. The 16 days activism campaign, OBR was explained. Violence against women are rising day by day and the ways to curb this was discussed</td>
<td>30 women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03.12.2018</td>
<td>ISM (NGO) office</td>
<td>The South Asian Women’s day was organized ISM (NGO) office. Women and adolescent girls participated. The 16 days activism campaign, OBR was explained. Violence against women are rising day by day and the ways to curb this was discussed The need for women to participate in governance process was explained.</td>
<td>80 women, men and LGBTQI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04.12.2018</td>
<td>Chellampatti</td>
<td>A meeting was organized in Chellampatti. The 16 days activism campaign, OBR was explained. Women discussed about the growing violence due to the lack of work due to the failure of rain.</td>
<td>35 women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05.12.2018</td>
<td>Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Parangipettai</td>
<td><strong>Signature Campaign:</strong> The children who came to sign were informed of this 16 days activism campaign</td>
<td>120 Girls and Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06.12.2018</td>
<td>Seva Mandir Girls Higher Secondary School, Parangipettai</td>
<td></td>
<td>97 Girls and Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The children and teachers were oriented on the 16 days of activism and how this is used to create awareness on the issues that women face and solve it. The various forms of violence faced by women and girls were discussed. The laws and special cells in the police department to help women in particular was informed. In the end an oath was taken.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Location/Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07.12.2018</td>
<td>Government Higher Secondary School, Killai</td>
<td>52 girls and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.12.2018</td>
<td>Railway Child Help Desk</td>
<td>42 sweepers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.12.2018</td>
<td>A meeting was organized in CREED Nagar, Killai. The 16 days activism campaign, OBR was explained. Violence against women are rising day by day and the ways to curb this was discussed</td>
<td>35 women and men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.12.2018</td>
<td>A Quiz completion was held in the Seva mandir Girls Higher Secondary School. 6 students participated in the Quiz. The topic for the Quiz was “Violence and Laws”. The whole school participated.</td>
<td>310 girls and staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Programme Attended by Ekta Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender Audit, Bharathiyyar University</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla, Ms. Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Training for the study on Shelter Home, Visthar, Bangalore</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla Mam, Ms. Tamil, Ms. Sujatha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI Training of Trainers, Gandhigram University</td>
<td>Ms. Anita, Ms. Sujatha, Ms. Gomathi, Mr. Sathish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHWP Committee meeting, GH, Madurai</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of Youth in Development of Society, KLN College</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and Masculinity for Gender Equality, MKU</td>
<td>Ms. Anita, Ms. Gomathi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Tamil Nadu Collective Advocacy Platform, Prajnya, Chennai</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBI National Consultation, New Delhi</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State level consultation on the status of Children Rights in TN, HRF, Chennai</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training programme on special care for children affected by drug abuse for gov / Ngo functionaries, MISS College, Madurai</td>
<td>Ms. Gomathi, Mr. Sathish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Stocktaing Meeting (Shelter Home Study), New Delhi</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla, Ms. Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Not Brides 2nd Global Meeting, Malaysia</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training on Child marriage, MISS College</td>
<td>Child line Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts Consultation on Legal Advocacy on Ending Child Marriage, Delhi</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl count Steering Group Meeting , Delhi</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house Training for Railway Child line, Madurai</td>
<td>Child line Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMPOWER, Nepal</td>
<td>Ms. Bimla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building Training for CHILDLINE Counsellor</td>
<td>Ms. Anita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview in the voluntary sector worker category, Delhi</td>
<td>Ms. Shanthi, Ms. Gomathi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>